1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

once erected on the grave; the names of dead people immediately became *pukimani* on their deaths and could not be used, and the same was true of all the names bestowed by a dead man on the children of his household and all the other words in the language that sounded similar to the name of the dead man.[4] All ceremonials and rituals were *pukimani* as were the main performers and the armlets, neck ornaments, and other ceremonial objects. People in a *pukimani* state had to observe all sorts of avoidances of and abstentions from everyday actions, particularly with regard to food and sex. Close relatives of dead people could not touch food but had to be fed by nonmourners. That pillar of rigid orthodoxy, Tu'untalumi, was virtually never able to feed himself but was in a *pukimani* state almost the whole year round and needed one of his wives to feed him. (Another advantage of a large household.) Certain spots in the bush or on the banks of streams were *pukimani* places; the dimly seen outline of the Australian coast was *pukimani* as was the ocean near Cape Keith where the Tiwi ancestors had first created the Tiwi world; and finally, the violation of a *pukimani* restriction rendered the violator *pukimani*.

Pukimani as thus applied to people, places, things, names, words, restrictions, and avoidances, meant both sacred and taboo, and was clearly one of that widespread class of words and concepts that is almost standard among the simpler societies. The only noteworthy thing about its Tiwi form is that *pukimani* was a state which people did not actively seek to enter but which happened to people regardless of their wishes. Furthermore, when a man found himself in a state of *pukimani*, his behavior was automatically prescribed for him and for the duration of his *pukimani* condition he observed his avoidances and his abstentions just as automatically as he dropped them when his *pukimani* period expired. When he became *pukimani*, he punctiliously fulfilled the requirements because if he did not, he was likely to be unsuccessful in his enterprises. Big men simply did not dare to be casual about the requirements lest their reputations suffer and they lose face and influence. Less successful men were occasionally explained as probably being secret violators. "His wives and daughters all seem to die young; he must have broken some *pukimani* restrictions sometime" was a reason often given for somebody's failure to be as successful as he might have been. It was noticeable in such explanations of nonsuccess that the failure, or in our terms the bad luck, was attributed to the violation of the taboos, never to the active displeasure of the spirits. The spirits simply did not figure in the picture.

Apart from the big ceremonial occasions, a Tiwi did not have much concern with religion in his everyday life except through some aspect of the *pukimani* system. It was only through *pukimani* that the sacred world impinged upon him at all for most of the year. Since *pukimani* was a condition that could not be actively sought but "just happened" to a person every so often by such common events as the death of a relative, his wife giving birth, or his

[4] When a man named Tibuki died in 1928, a crisis occurred at the Mission where the natives were supposed to make their requests in pidgin English. How could they now ask for tobacco, since that word was now *pukimani*?

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 O120 Tlwi O120

discmbarked on the edge of a large expanse of wet, grassy marsh. 123
On the bank a few low trees provided cover for the hunters, who 223
spread out about fifty yards apart. We waited. Then in the distance
the first flock of six geese appeared, flying low over the marsh. They
were not headed for us, but passed over the line of hunters about
a hundred yards upstream. We could not see the hunters, but the
same six geese continued safely after passing the firing line. Now
another small group of geese seemed to be heading in our direction.
Albert slowly took his position, his legs apart, the left stretched
in front, the right somewhat bent as his body arched backward. One
milingani he held near the charred end in his right arm which was
so far back over his head that the tip of the stick almost touched
the ground. As counter balance, his left hand, holding several
spares, was pointed forward toward the geese. Just as the geese
were to pass over our heads, they swerved and went instead over the
man to the right of us. You could hear the whir of the stick as it
was thrown with tremendous force up into the air, turning end over
end, and then the 'thwack' as it reached its mark. A goose, its neck
hanging loosely, spiralled down, to land with a splash close to
the hunter's feet.

Now the flocks were more numerous as the dusk grew thicker.
Soon a group flew directly overhead and Albert aimed and threw,
but the spiralling stick slid off the wing tip of the lead goose and
he continued, somewhat shaken but quite unharmed. Again and
again Albert threw at the increasing numbers of honking homeward-
bound geese, but when the last stick was thrown and it was quite
dark, we still had no geese. When we gathered, it was found that [763
out of ten hunters with perhaps three hundred sticks thrown, only 777]
two sticks had found their mark. This was not good. Albert was
worried. "Maybe someone bin die, make me bad luck."

Later that evening Black Joe started singing a chant. 223
"*Mobuditi*, plenty goose here; give us some." I asked him 789
whom he was singing to and, although names of the dead are most 775
infrequently mentioned for fear that the ghost of that person, its
mobuditi, will hear it, this was one occasion where the *mobuditi*
could do more good than harm. So the *mobuditi* of Bangri was
called upon. Bangri, it was explained, had been a big man, "Plenty
wives, maybe hundred. This his country; him grave close up along

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Fig. 35. Weather-worn poles mark the grave of someone long dead but not forgotten

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bush. He bin die long time ago." This had been his country while alive and it was still his country, for his spirit remains near the grave and still hunts the wild animals and birds, while the spirits of his wives collect the wild yams, and his little spirit children play in the bush. Bangri will share this food with others who come, and their *mobudities*, should they die and be buried in the country, for as long as his name is remembered, and until his grave-posts rot with the passing of time.

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But Bangri was not cooperative. The next day the hunters found little game in the bush and the women turned to the laborious job of digging six-foot holes with a stick to obtain the small yams that are to be found at this season. Again the grass was too thick, the snakes too cheeky, and Albert advised against our going bush. I decided the more logical explanation was that Albert considered we ourselves had ample food, and besides he was sincerely worried about his long run of bad luck. But he left with the others that

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123 ping the axe with his teeth, he ran up the sapling on all fours with
222 as much agility as a monkey. Upon reaching the crotch, he put his
481 arms around the trunk, placed the soles of his feet close together against the bark, and quickly progressed in a sort of leaping motion up to the top of the tree. Once there he casually climbed up, over, and around the various branches, until he reached the object of his climb, the hollow branch with the little hole through which was passing a steady stream of small insects. This branch was quickly cut through and fell crashing to the ground. Soon Albert was down again, investigating this find with Agnes and me. The hole was enlarged and the combs of dark honey exposed, still crawling with the little black bees. We dug in with our fingers or [133] brushes made by chewing small twigs, quite unmindful of the bees, who obligingly never developed stings in this part of the world. [262 The honey was dark and very strong, but when mixed with the dry, 237] crumbly, yellow "bee bread" a nice balance of taste was obtained. It took the three of us very little time to finish the sugar-bag and off we went—this time in a homeward direction.

123 The one possum looked very small and Albert again began mut-
224 tering about "someone *mobuditi* make me bad luck." We separated again and when almost to the creek Agnes suddenly held me back [777] and cautioned silence. Carefully she picked up a stout stick from the ground and then approached what I suddenly noticed was a very fat goana, about two feet long, apparently sound asleep on a nearby tree trunk. One quick blow and the lizard fell to the ground, quite dead. We carried the catch to the landing and quickly had another swim before Albert caught up. We were gathering firewood when Albert arrived and explained his delay by holding up another
123 possum. The second possum was immediately gutted, then both
252 were laid on the fire and turned frequently until all the fur had been burned off and the skin made brittle. The animals were quartered and laid again on the fire until well roasted. The goana received no preliminary treatment before going on the fire. When all were [264] cooked, they were removed and laid on a "table" of clean, green
123 leaves, and we reached in and tore off pieces of the steaming, juicy
262 meat. It is impossible to describe this meat to someone who has not tasted it. All I can say is that it was tender and tasty and perfectly